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# REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON ITS TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: J. A. MWANIKI (Kenya)

## Chapter ___. TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION

### A. Technical co-operation in statistics

1. The Commission considered item 11 (a) of its agenda at its 445th and 446th meetings, on 8 February 1991. It had before it the following documents: (a) Report of the Secretary-General on technical co-operation in statistics (E/CN.3/1991/25); (b) Report of the Secretary-General containing updated information on the work of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat (E/CN.3/1991/30).

2. The Commission welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on technical co-operation in statistics (E/CN.3/1991/25) and expressed appreciation to the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat for its preparation. It noted that by limiting the data to multilateral agencies, the comparability of information on expenditures had been substantially improved, though limited in scope.

3. The Commission was of the opinion that the inclusion in the report of information on priorities for statistical development reported by the regional commissions, specialized agencies and other multilateral programmes was useful. The Commission noted that the United Nations Department of Technical Co-operation

for Development worked within its area of competence, at the request of Member States in support of the efforts of Member States and the priorities they determined for their own development. For UNDP, national plans and priorities were the frame of reference for operational activities. UNFPA concentrated its resources in those developing countries that had the most serious population problems and the most urgent need for assistance. In addition, UNFPA had increasingly emphasized activities aimed at improving the role and status of women. The overall goal of technical co-operation generally was the attainment of self-reliance in developing countries through national capacity-building.

4. The Commission made a number of suggestions for further improvement of the report: information should be supplied on expenditure in real terms; agencies supplying information should have an opportunity to review the text of the report before it was made final; information should be provided on personnel by headquarters and field staff and by short-term and long-term staff; expenditure on technical co-operation in statistics should be compared with the total expenditure for technical co-operation; a more detailed classification of expenditure by subject area should be provided; a breakdown of training by subject area should be included; and more detailed information on technical co-operation projects in Africa should be provided.

5. The Commission was pleased to learn that an updated edition of the Directory of Technical Co-operation in Statistics (ST/ESA/STAT/105/Rev.2) had been issued. It noted that the Directory included information on technical co-operation in statistics available from multilateral and bilateral agencies. Further, it was an instrument by which developing countries could gain access to international assistance and by which donor countries and agencies could co-ordinate their programmes. The Commission recommended that revised updated editions of the Directory be published and methods explored for disseminating the information more quickly.

6. Several representatives provided information on their countries' bilateral programmes of technical co-operation in statistics. Representatives of regional commissions and international organizations also provided additional information. It was stressed that the output of an effective national statistical system was essential for sound development planning and programmes and that technical co-operation in statistics should encompass promotion of the use of statistics by planners.

7. Many members from developing countries expressed their appreciation of the technical co-operation in statistics provided, and the support provided by the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development and the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat in co-operation with the regional commissions. One member stressed that the mechanism of project implementation should be improved. The time required for project approval should be reduced, as should the time between the purchase of equipment and its delivery.

8. The Commission noted that during the period under review technical co-operation projects covered a wide variety of statistical subjects and was pleased to note the increase in the financial support given to the programme by UNFPA, UNDP, the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development and other multilateral and

bilateral agencies. The subjects covered were multisector statistics; economic statistics, including national accounts; demographic statistics, including population censuses, census and survey cartography, sampling and surveys, household surveys and statistics on women and on special population groups; and data processing and informatics. The Commission recognized that the sharp increase in resources provided for technical co-operation in demographic statistics during 1989 and 1990 could be attributed to the peak in support for national population and housing census activities associated with the 1990 World Programme. Nevertheless, the Commission reiterated the concern expressed at its twenty-fifth session that the "share of resources available for economic statistics was diminishing" (E/1989/21, para. 167) and urged donors that had economic statistics within their mandates to increase the level of their support to such technical co-operation.

9. Statistical training, during the period, remained a highly important aspect of the technical co-operation programme in statistics and the Commission expressed satisfaction that the overall funding for training had increased. The Commission noted, however, that expenditures on training included only fellowships, study tours, workshops and seminars and excluded expenditures classified under personnel related to such training activities as national-level training courses and on-the-job training. Due to the importance of that field, the Commission urged the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development and the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat to increase support for that component of the programme.

10. The Commission stressed the importance of co-ordination among organizations providing technical co-operation in statistics and the critical role of the recipient country in the co-ordination process. It emphasized the role of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat in promoting co-ordination of technical co-operation projects in statistics. However, in view of the overall importance of co-ordination, the suggestion was made to set up an independent group that, taking into consideration the mandate of the different organizations concerned, would assess the various activities under way to see whether or not there was duplication in technical co-operation.

11. The Commission noted that General Assembly resolution 44/211 and decision 90/26 of the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme provided the overall framework for United Nations technical co-operation activities in all fields and for a new agency support cost system. The Commission understood that the aim of the new system, which would become effective in January 1992, was to enhance the technical capabilities of institutions in developing countries through national execution of programmes at the country level, requiring the United Nations system to adjust to the co-operative programmes. The Commission strongly recommended that the implementation of the decisions on new agency support cost arrangements not affect negatively the implementation of the technical co-operation programme in statistics. Since consultations on those arrangements were currently in progress and their impact was unclear, the Commission was of the view that a report should be prepared for its twenty-seventh session on the new arrangements and their impact on technical co-operation in statistics.

Action taken by the Commission

12. The Commission:

(a) Stressed the great importance of technical co-operation programmes with developing countries and endorsed the current technical co-operation activities in statistics carried out by the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development with the substantive technical support of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat;

(b) Emphasized the importance of the training component in the implementation of country projects and urged that resources allocated to that component be increased;

(c) Stressed the importance of co-ordination in multilateral and bilateral technical co-operation in statistical activities and urged the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat to continue to promote such co-ordination in collaboration with other international organizations;

(d) Requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission, at its twenty-seventh session, a report on technical co-operation in statistics, including information on the impact of General Assembly resolution 44/211 and the new agency support cost arrangements on the provision of technical co-operation in statistics.

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